

My

Dear

Friend

By

Leonard

Goodisman

WHY I LIKE IT: *Acting Drama Editor EZRA NEIGHBORS writes... It's quite refreshing and exhilarating to be thrust right in the throws of what is at stake. My Dear Friend by Leonard D Goodisman captivates in its simplicity of circumstance. What happens when a "distinguished" speaker is interrupted with all eyes in the room are on them? What happens when the interrupter is challenged back? A devilishly quick power struggle that eggs the mind on for more. (Spacing is playwright's own.)*

My Dear Friend
SYNOPSIS

A speaker is interrupted by a member of the audience who challenges him.

SPEAKER- any age > 20, any gender

INTERRUPTER - any age or gender

SPEAKER

I will conclude my introductory remarks this evening by introducing our keynote speaker. This person is not only a remarkable professional with an extraordinary contribution to our field, but a great talent and my dear friend, my dear, dear friend.

INTERRUPTER

I ... I... (coming forward, looks around a little awkwardly) have a question.

SPEAKER

A question. Of course.

INTERRUPTER

Well, maybe it's not a question, a kind of comment.

SPEAKER

A question can be a kind of comment.

INTERRUPTER

A remark. I don't know. Maybe even a complaint.

SPEAKER

A complaint's a kind of comment too, I guess, if it's not too long in interrupting our program.

INTERRUPTER

Yes, right. It's just that when you talk about a professional's talent with great contribution to the field and then you add that the person is your dear friend, you see, don't you?

SPEAKER

No. See what?

INTERRUPTER

What are you really saying and who are you saying it about? I guess that's a question.

SPEAKER

When I talk about my dear friend, I am in fact, talking about my dear friend, who is my dear, one of my dearest friends.

INTERRUPTER

But are you?

SPEAKER

Are I, am I what?

INTERRUPTER

Mightn't you be identifying yourself as a dear friend in an attempt, even if justifiably so, to put yourself in the same **category** as this great professional, with great talent, a great contribution to our field, and probably with many admirers? You'd like them to admire you too, perhaps. I say perhaps about this category.

SPEAKER

I am, in an obvious sense, in the same **category**, the same class as my dear friend. We are after all a classless society.

INTERRUPTER

Clever argument, but it doesn't seem fair, after all, whether you're actually in the same class or not. We're talking about this other person, not you; to bring you in is stealing something from your dear friend, who is great and talented. Putting you in the same class means you must also be great and talented and so on.

SPEAKER

Are you denying that I am? Is that your purpose?

INTERRUPTER

No, oh no. No need. Your reputation speaks for itself. But did you also mention me? I missed it if you did. To be in a certain class, that there is a class, I think there have to be people who are not in that class. Now, I could be in that same class too, in this classless society. Certainly if I were doing the putting, I could, would, might put myself in that very category of being your dear friend.

SPEAKER

But are you, really, in the same class?

INTERRUPTER

In this classless society? Maybe, maybe not. The point is you, as introducer of our program, are doing the putting.

SPEAKER

And even if you were in our class, why would I mention you? I'm the speaker. And maybe, just maybe, I wasn't stealing or borrowing or sharing from my dear friend's glory but was giving some of my own glory to my dear friend, so much more glory that my friend has from being my friend.

INTERRUPTER

That's another thing I don't understand. What makes you think, even if you are the curator for this whole event we're having here, that your calling someone your dear friend increases our respect for that someone's work? Might there be another someone who might have some work they would like to have applauded? Just saying.

SPEAKER

Another someone? Who has some work they would like me to applaud? Someone here?

INTERRUPTER

I don't know.

SPEAKER

You perhaps. Might you mean...

INTERRUPTER

I don't...

SPEAKER

I recognize you. You have in the past asked me to look at your work, and, I suppose, asked everyone.

INTERRUPTER

That's an accusation. Yes, everyone who counts, who has dear friends had the opportunity to look at my work; but you were too busy.

SPEAKER

Only so many hours in a day. So?

INTERRUPTER

So there are so many considerations, of race, and gender, and age, that might lead you to not look at my work; and one consideration might be or might not be that I am not the right age or gender or race, or nationality, whatever any of these are. Why would I want someone to look at my work who's too busy and doesn't want to look at it?

SPEAKER

Any more than I would want you to assess my work. Why would I?

INTERRUPTER

I'm too busy.

SPEAKER

I wasn't asking you to.

INTERRUPTER

I wasn't offering, but I have. (Reacts to the speaker's blank look.)

SPEAKER

You have what?

INTERRUPTER

I have assessed your work, as a collection, the all of it, the whatever you have of it. You are a great professional, in our class, with an extraordinary contribution to the field and to our group, a great talent, a leader amongst us, and certainly my very dear friend.

CURTAIN

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *"My Dear Friend" probes lightly into belonging to the right class or group, regardless how defined. That's what makes one the right person. One reaction is to get yourself into the right class or group, even if it means pretending or making up more groups. But some philosophers have observed that the more groups created in society, especially if animosities among groups can be engineered, the easier it is to control and oppress the population and that's the point of groups anyway. That's what inspired this play. "My dear friend" means you're like me but do I want to be like you?*

AUTHOR BIO: Leonard writes primarily for theater. Besides creating plays, he's produced and engaged in all aspects of theater. His work entertains but also stimulates and inspires one's sociological, psychological, and political consciences, and through these one's spirituality.